

From: bob carlin
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/24/02 1:19pm
Subject: Microsoft Antitrust Trial

This email is to register my opinion about the Microsoft antitrust trial.

I believe that the settlement should require Microsoft to disclose not just its internal operating system interfaces and protocols, but the entire source code for its operating systems. I am not advocating that competitors be given free rein to rewrite the operating system and distribute their own versions of it, just that competitors be given the source code so that developers can know how best to interface to Microsoft's operating system.

Microsoft has abused its position as a monopolistic source of operating systems by providing unstable operating systems and then pushing new versions of the operating systems onto the marketplace, at a cost of about \$100 per version. The company has not used its position to develop good value software for the public, only software that maximizes its own profits.

Microsoft Corporation has a history of predatory and unfair business practices. At one time, Microsoft forced OEM computer manufacturers to include Microsoft's operating system on all personal computers that they manufactured. Microsoft was forced to discontinue this.

Another example of unfair business practices was Microsoft's warnings that other operating systems would not operate properly with applications for IBM-compatible personal computers. At that time, a company called Data Research was selling an operating system called DR-DOS. By all accounts I have heard, DR-DOS was fully compatible with the applications written for IBM-compatible personal computers. By spreading false information, Microsoft eliminated competition in the marketplace.

The settlement also provides that computer manufacturers and software developers will be free to do business with Microsoft's competitors without fear of retaliation. That provision of the settlement is an implicit admission that Microsoft has used its power in the marketplace to retaliate against manufacturers and developers in the past.

Those are examples of Microsoft's prior unfair business practices. Currently, Microsoft is accused of monopolistic practices that have hampered competitors' efforts to develop applications to run on Microsoft Windows operating systems. The proposed settlement would require Microsoft to disclose internal operating system interfaces and protocols. Given Microsoft's past history of unfair practices, what

mechanism will be in place to ensure that Microsoft abides by the terms of the settlement?

Microsoft is, for all intents and purposes, a monopoly. Defining a monopoly as the only provider of a good or service to the market, Microsoft qualifies as a monopoly because it has nearly all of the market share for operating systems for personal computers. The only other viable operating systems for personal computers are Apple Computer's Macintosh operating system and Linux. But these systems together only have about 5 percent of market share. And are not really viable competitors in marketplace for IBM-compatible operating systems. Microsoft publishes a new version of its Windows operating system about once every two years, with the pace increasing in the last few years. However, succeeding versions of the operating system have not necessarily provided value-added to consumers (both home users and business users). I work in the field of computer security and I am very aware that Microsoft operating systems for network servers are less secure and more prone to crashing than other operating systems for network servers, such as the various types of Unix operating systems. And workstation operating systems are notorious for instability. Microsoft itself tacitly admits that its Windows operating systems for PCs are unstable when it advertises that each new version will be more stable than the previous version.